

Rear Admiral John Lang

Biography



John Lang is a retired professional mariner who has served in both the Merchant and Royal Navies. He first went to sea in 1959 as a navigating officer cadet with the P&O and later transferred to the Royal Navy where he specialised in both submarines and navigation. He commanded two submarines and a frigate and his last appointment before retiring in 1995, was Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence in the rank of Rear Admiral.

On leaving the Navy he spent 5 years as the UK's Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents before devoting himself to voluntary work in the maritime sector. He has been the Chairman of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, is President of the Association of Sail Training Organisations (ASTO), and a Vice President of the RNLI. He is a Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, a

younger Brother of Trinity House, and a Freeman of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners. He is also President of the Institute of Seamanship and sits on the Royal Yachting Association's Yacht masters Qualification Panel.

He continues to take a great interest in anything to do with the sea, has written a book about the loss of the Titanic from the perspective of a professional marine accident investigator, and lectures widely on maritime subjects. He lives near Winchester.

Night Landings and No Moon: Clandestine Sea Operations of WWII

Abstract:

This talk seeks to introduce the audience to a little known type of operation undertaken during the Second World War. Special Operations conducted covertly by sea began soon after the Nazi occupation of Norway in April 1940 and lasted until the end of the war in May 1945. During this time a number of organisations were created to conduct a range of clandestine operations that linked Britain and other friendly countries with enemy occupied territory in Scandinavia, Europe, the Mediterranean and the Far East. They were conducted by fast motor boats drawn from Coastal Forces, submarines, and a range of craft that could blend in with those being operated by locals in the area of interest. Their various tasks included the insertion and recovery of agents, the rescuing of allied aircrew, the collection of intelligence from covert 'mail boxes' in occupied territory, pre-invasion beach reconnaissance and the landing of Special Forces to carry out clandestine operations behind enemy lines. They had to operate in total secrecy and nearly all operations were conducted on dark nights with no moon. They involved extraordinary acts of bravery, very high standards of seamanship and navigation, and some remarkable examples of improvisation and ingenuity. They made a valuable, and largely unrecognised, contribution to the outcome of the war.